

REMARKS

The Office Action of March 19, 2002 was received and carefully reviewed. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested for the reasons advanced in detail below. Claims 1-4 were pending prior to this response. By the above amendments, claims 1 and 4 have been amended, and, therefore, claims 1-4 remain currently pending. In view of these actions and the following remarks, reconsideration of this application is requested. Also submitted with this response is a Letter Submitting Corrected Formal Drawings correcting Figure 3 by providing the notation "Prior Art" as required.

With regard to the original claims, the Examiner has set forth the following rejection:

1) Claims 1-4, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), as being obvious in view of the teachings of the admitted prior art (Figure 3) combined with the teachings of Sakata ('930), at pages 2-3, of the Office Action.

The Applicant's respectfully traverse this rejection. From a reading of the above rejection, it appears that the Examiner is relying on the discussion of the prior art in Sakata as shown at columns 1 and 2, as well as Figures 8-11. In that discussion of Sakata, the switch unit 3 is not discussed as being electrically connected to the rotor side casing 4 without wiring as is required by the amended claims. To the contrary, the steering wheel switch is indicated as electric equipment 7, while the switch unit 3 is not a steering wheel switch at all. Instead, the switch unit 3 and rotor side casing 4 are separate units which together are connected to bracket 1 of the vehicle body. Please note that the rotor side unit 4 of Sakata includes a fixed side member 10 fixed to the vehicle body (via bracket 1) and a rotary side member 11 secured to and rotating with the steering wheel 6. This rotor side unit 4, with its connection wiring 17 to the steering wheel switch 7 via steering wheel wiring 18, is exactly the prior art embodiment of Figure 3 discussed in the present specification. To clearly emphasize this point and distinguish from the Sakata reference, the present claims 1 and 4 have been amended as follows:

"wherein at least one steering wheel switch is electrically connected to the rotor side casing without wiring." (emphasis added)

By making such an amendment, the inventive embodiments of Sakata, discussed at columns 3-6 and Figures 1-6, are also distinguished from the present invention since the rotor side unit 27 of Sakata includes an electrical connection, either 32 or 32A, to electrical equipment 7 provided to the steering wheel 6 via wiring connector 18, see specifically column 5, lines 25-32.

Finally, a review of the Nishikigi et al ('366) and Kuroda et al ('544) references, which have been cited of interest by the Examiner, indicates that neither reference teaches or suggest the presently claimed invention for the same reasons set forth in regard to the Sakata reference.

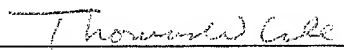
As the Examiner is no doubt aware, M.P.E.P. Chapters 2142-2143.03 set forth that three basic criteria must be met by the prior art to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or the general knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify or combine the reference(s). Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success of the proposed combination, and third, the prior art must teach or suggest all of the claimed limitations. Further, MPEP Chapter 2143.01 (at pages 2100-124 to 125) sets forth that a *prima facie* case of obviousness cannot be established when, upon making the proposed combination of teachings, such combination would destroy or render ineffective the very advantage gained by the reference teachings.

The Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), discussed above, fail to satisfy the second and third requirements above for establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness since no reference or combination of references teaches or suggests each and every feature of claim 1 as outlined above. Nor does the proposed combination provide a reasonable expectation of success in that the combination proposed by the Examiner, if made, would not yield the device presently claimed, again for the reasons outlined above, and, in fact, would yield an apparatus which is the same as the instant prior art as shown in Figure 3. For these

reasons, the Examiner's rejection of claims 1-4, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), is believed to be improper and should be withdrawn.

While the present application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, should the Examiner find some issue to remain unresolved, or should any new issues arise, which could be eliminated through discussions with applicants' representative, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone in order that the further prosecution of this application can thereby be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas W. Cole
Reg. No. 28,290

NIXON PEABODY LLP
8180 Greensboro Drive, Suite 800
McLean, Virginia 22102
(703) 770-9300
(703) 770-9400 fax

TWC/JWM

MARKED-UP COPY OF AMENDED CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1 and 4 as follows:

1. (Amended) A roll connector structure for a vehicle including a stator side casing which is fixed to a steering column, a rotor side casing which is mounted to the stator side casing and rotates integrally with the steering wheel, and a cable which is accommodated between the stator side casing and the rotor side casing in a state of being wound in a spiral manner, wherein at least one steering switch is electrically connected to the rotor side casing without wiring.

4. (Amended) A roll connector structure for a vehicle including a stator side casing which is fixed to a steering column side member, a rotor side casing which is mounted to the stator side casing and rotates integrally with a steering wheel, and a cable which is accommodated between the stator side casing and the rotor side casing, wherein at least one steering switch is electrically connected to the rotor side casing without wiring.